

**Expedition Aboard DISCOVERY Yacht SAM  
March 2018**



**EXPEDITION PROFILE**

**March 11-18, 2018 aboard DISCOVERY Yacht SAM**

The International SeaKeepers Society partnered with the University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience to collect plankton samples in the Pacific Ocean. A researcher along with crew members spent a week aboard D/Y Sam collecting samples daily.

The purpose of the expedition was to collect a genomic snapshot of the biodiversity present in the water column at various sites off of Oahu, Hawaii. Data collected at each site contributes to a global perspective on the network of organisms present in the world today. This data can be compared to past observations and future replicates (in combination with anthropomorphic and natural fluctuations in the climate and marine environment) to characterize the changes in planktonic marine diversity and interactions over time. Recent scientific innovations have provided a new technique called metabarcoding, in which researchers can take a sample containing thousands of tiny organisms and purify a few genes of interest from each organism. The genes are sequenced all at once to rapidly inventory every specimen in the entire sample.

Samples were collected at least once a day for the duration of the crossing. For each site the date, time, GPS coordinates, duration, and conditions were recorded. For every site, at least one net (500 micron mesh plankton tow net) was deployed, and for the majority of the sites, an 80 micron mesh net was also deployed.

Samples were then screened for organisms of particular interest for individual processing and a selection of larvae were photographed and preserved individually for further analyses. Preliminary notes indicate that representative organisms from at least 15 phyla were identified, including ctenophores (comb jellies), echinoderms (like starfish, sea urchin, and sea cucumber larvae), cnidarians (jelly fish), mollusks (sea slug larvae, and juvenile squids and octopuses), arthropods (crustaceans like crabs, amphipods, etc.), chordates, and hemichordates.

This was a great opportunity, not only to collect and observe these organisms in their natural environment, but also to teach non-scientists about the importance of this work in the context of ecology and conservation.

This was the second SeaKeepers expedition aboard D/Y SAM and one of numerous trips with the Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience of the University of Florida conducting genome sequencing.

**DISCOVERY Yacht Specialist:**

Tony Gilbert

Tony@seakeepers.org

255 Aragon Ave. Third Floor

Coral Gables, Florida  
Tel: 305.448.7089

**SeaKeepers Media Contact:**

[Media@seakeepers.org](mailto:Media@seakeepers.org)

255 Aragon Ave. Third Floor Coral Gables, Florida  
Tel: 305.448.7089